

NOTES FROM WESTERN SAMOA, INCLUDING
THE DESCRIPTION OF A NEW PARROT-
FINCH (*ERYTHRURA*)

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IN 1970 the Delaware Museum of Natural History sent a field party to Savaii, Western Samoa, to carry out ornithological research, including recording the voices of some of the endemic species. The visit was made during the first three weeks of September by me and Dr. and Mrs. James Gaughran. We visited both the islands of Upolu and Savaii, concentrating on the latter, where we spent two weeks and ranged from sea level to the mountain tops (elevation 5,000 feet). One new subspecies was discovered, and records were obtained for three species new to Western Samoa.

I wish to thank Dr. Dean Amadon of the American Museum of Natural History and Dr. David Snow of the British Museum (Natural History) for lending specimens and assisting in other ways. Common names used are those suggested by Mayr (Birds of the Southwest Pacific, Macmillan Co., New York, 1945).

Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*).—One adult bird seen on two occasions three miles inland from Lalomalava. Peregrines occur at least sporadically in Fiji (Viti Levu), some 750 miles WSW of Savaii, and may breed there (race *nesiotes*) (Mayr, op. cit.). Otherwise the species is virtually unknown in the Central Pacific.

Not previously recorded from Western Samoa.

Rock Dove (*Columba livia*).—A total of about 20 birds was seen on Savaii on two occasions, once at Lalomalava, and once at Satuiatua. The birds did not seem to stray far from the native huts and were not seen around large buildings in towns. Undoubtedly these were domesticated birds, but all were of the wild plumage type, i.e. gray coloration. The species may be expected to spread into other areas as a feral bird, but probably in settled areas only, as few cliffs are available in the wild.

Not previously recorded from Western Samoa.

Tooth-billed Pigeon (*Didunculus strigirostris*).—Found in virgin forest from 1,000 feet to 4,500 feet, where most often seen sitting on large limbs near tree trunk and not on the ground as has been generally recorded. Voice a slow *hoo, hoo, hoo*, low-pitched and infrequently heard.

This species is in no immediate danger of extinction so long as the forests remain intact. The bird was seen in original forests, sometimes quite near towns, but not in cut-over areas anywhere.

Red-vented Bulbul (*Pycnonotus cafer bengalensis*).—1 adult ♂ specimen was taken 6 September 1970, at Lalomalava. Birds seen in Apia, Upolu, and around Lalomalava, Savaii. These birds were numerous in Apia, but in Lalomalava only small numbers were seen. This species was undoubtedly introduced into Samoa, perhaps directly from India, but more likely from the introduced population of Fiji.

Not previously recorded from Western Samoa.

Samoan Starling (*Aplonis atrifusca*).—This bird was encountered in small to moderate

numbers from the sea coast to the mountain tops. Nests, heretofore unknown, were found on two separate occasions about 40–50 feet up in cracks in old, dead trees, one in a limb and one in a trunk. A female carrying nest material was collected on 12 September 1970, at Lalomalava, Savaii. Soft part colors of four adults are: bill black, iris dark brown, feet black.

Red-headed Parrot-Finch (*Erythrura cyaneovirens*).—This colorful parrot-finch of the Central Pacific is separable into five subspecies, the nominate race being from Upolu, Western Samoa. Although some years ago Mayr (Amer. Mus. Novitates, 489:7, 1931) pointed out the Savaii population might be separable, only recently has material been collected that proves this suggestion to be valid. The Savaii race may be called:

***Erythrura cyaneovirens gaughrani* new subspecies**

Type: DMNH 4868, male, Mt. 'O'a, Savaii, Western Samoa, 5,000 feet, 8 September 1970. Wing 64 mm, tail 32 mm, bill 13 mm, tarsus 18 mm.

Diagnosis: Male differs from *E. c. cyaneovirens* of Upolu by having the red on the head and tail decidedly darker; blue on the nape paler and less extensive; back green, lacking any blue; chin and throat green with a less extensive and paler blue wash; underparts green with only a slight trace of a blue wash; wing coverts greener lacking any of bluish edgings. Immatures from Savaii mirror the characters of the male by being green with very little blue. Adult female unknown.

Range: Savaii, Western Samoa.

Specimens examined: *E. c. cyaneovirens*—Upolu, 4 ♂, 1 ♀, 1 ?; *E. c. gaughrani*—Savaii, 1 ♂ (Type), 2 imm. ♂, 4 imm. ♀, 2 imm. ?.

Etymology: This new subspecies is named for Dr. James Gaughran of Stanford University.

The other races that I recognize of the species are:

Erythrura cyaneovirens pealii.—*Geospiza prasina* Peale, 1848, U.S. Expl. Expd. Bds., p. 116 (Vanua Levu, Fiji). *Erythrura pealii* Hartlaub, 1852, Arch. F. Naturg., p. 104 (new name for *Geospiza prasina* Peale, 1848). Range: Fiji Islands.

Erythrura cyaneovirens regia.—*Erythrospiza regia* Sclater, 1881, Ibis, p. 554 (Api = Epi Island, New Hebrides). Range: Bank Islands and northern New Hebrides.

Erythrura cyaneovirens serena.—*Erythrospiza serena* Sclater, 1881, Ibis, p. 544 (Aneiteum Island, New Hebrides). *Erythrura cyaneovirens efatensis* Mayr, 1931, Am. Mus. Novitates, 489:8 (Efate Island, New Hebrides).

E. c. efatensis is slightly and incompletely differentiated from *E. c. serena*, and I treat it as a synonym of the latter. Differences in the red coloration of the head and upper tail coverts seem to be due to differences in wear in the available specimens. The *serena* series was taken in February and appears to be more worn than the *efatensis* series, taken in June and July. Mayr (1931:10) also mentioned possible differences in the color of the secondary coverts, those of *serena* thought to be green versus bluish in *efatensis*. I found this character to be variable, with the fully adult *serena* being quite blue.

In wing length Mayr (1931:9) shows *efatensis* as being 61–65 mm in 26 adults, versus 66–67 in 3 adult *serena*. I have remeasured 16 of the *efatensis* and 2 of the *serena* and find that while the former average shorter-winged, there is overlap. My *efatensis* measurements are 62.5–66.5 and *serena* are 65–67.5, thus showing an overlap in the range 65–66.5 (4 birds). Range: Aneiteum and Efate Islands, New Hebrides.